



**Arkansas
Department of
Human Services**



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF

Health

Keeping Your Hometown Healthy

Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative (AECCS)

**“Building Bridges----
From Birth To School”**



Purpose of the AECCS Initiative

The purpose of this initiative is to increase the health and well-being of Arkansas' young children and their families by creating an integrated service delivery platform for all early childhood services. This will maximize the existing investments in early childhood, and assure that Arkansas children are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time they enter school.

Building Bridges

The AECCS Initiative is really about building a bridge from birth to school. It will bring together early childhood practitioners, state government agency staff, health care providers, advocates, researchers, and other key stakeholders to focus attention on identifying system gaps and barriers that currently hinder the well-being of children and families. These stakeholders will organize their efforts to address gaps and present systemic solutions to these challenges, as they link the excellent efforts that are already making a difference. The bridges that are built in this initiative will serve to support children and families as they make the natural, but at times challenging, transitions that occur in early childhood.

Timeline

The **Planning Phase** will begin in January of 2004 and will conclude in June of 2005 with the formulation of a systems plan that will reflect the “bridges” built during the partnership. The lead program agency for this initiative will be the Department of Human Services Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education. The Arkansas Department of Health is serving as the fiscal agent. This partnership has been awarded \$100,000 per year for the duration of this phase. The **Implementation Phase** will begin in July of 2005 and last for multiple years. The amount of funding per year has not yet been determined.

Engaging Key Stakeholders

In order for the **Planning Phase** of the initiative to be effective, state-level stakeholders need to identify their individual roles in early childhood system development and make a commitment to support and advocate for cross-service planning by serving on one of the initial five focus area work groups.

In addition to the work groups representing the five focus areas, two additional groups will convene:

- **Government Interagency Team** – Brings together senior-level representatives of city, state and federal agencies to address cross-agency issues that affect young children and their families.
- **Systems Coordination and Steering Committee** – Works with representatives from all work groups to address system gaps and barriers and recommends ways to better coordinate and improve programs and services.

Five Focus Areas

A comprehensive system might include many different services depending on local community need. As a starting point for the AECCS Initiative, five focus areas have been identified by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, with states reserving the flexibility to add others that might be complementary or needed.. These **Five Focus Areas** are:

- Medical Homes
- Social-Emotional Health
- Early Care and Education
- Family Support
- Parent Education

Maternal and Child Health Bureau Comprehensive Goals

Medical Homes –

- All **children** will have a source of coordinated, comprehensive, and family-centered primary health care
- All **children** will be enrolled in public or private health insurance programs
- **Families'** health needs will be met through available services and systems
- **Families** will be able to apply for and access services readily
- **Families** will become informed consumers of health care
- **Community** systems will be cultivated that will link medical services in an effective manner
- **Communities** will have access to services due to increased provider capacity
- **State level policies and systems** will provide incentives to community- or hospital-based pediatric practices to operate as medical homes
- **State level policies and systems** will help to ensure adequate capacity across State of Arkansas
- Enrollment in **state health insurance** programs will increase, and measures of resulting health status will reflect the benefits of providing care in a medical home model.

Social-Emotional Health

- All **children** will be routinely assessed for problems or impairments in social-emotional development
- All **children** will have access to appropriate social-emotional services, and these services will be coordinated with the medical home
- **Families of young children** will have access to appropriate mental health services, and these services will be coordinated with the families' primary care setting.
- **Families'** needs will be met through support groups and other support services which are easily accessible and meet the diverse cultural structures of all families in Arkansas
- **Communities** will support the mental health of children and families by helping to link mental health professionals and early care/education providers
- **Communities** will encourage development of the workforce to provide adequate prevention and intervention services for all children and families
- **State level systems and policies** will reinforce mental health services for young children and families by assuring that funding streams are adequate to meet the needs across all regions of the state

Early Care and Education –

- All **children** will have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate early care and education
- **Families of young children** will have access to high quality, affordable care that facilitates achievement of their goals (e.g., employment, training/education)
- The child care provider capacity will be adequate to meet the needs of **communities**
- Early child care/education programs and providers will be linked to the overall service system and **community** resources
- **Community** businesses will support, subsidize, and/or provide child care.
- The **state** will ensure access to early learning opportunities for all children
- **State policies** will support the availability of high-quality child care for all children
- **State policies** will support blended funding opportunities
- **State policies** will address transition challenges and links between early childhood education services/programs, including transition for children in special education services

Family Support –

- **Children's** basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, clothing) will be met by parents/caretakers who have the support and resources to provide a nurturing family environment
- **Families of young children** will be able to achieve self-sufficiency
- **Communities** will engage families as meaningful partners in the development of policies and programs that will ultimately influence their well-being
- **Communities** will intentionally link services, programs and providers to create a strong base of support for families
- **Community** businesses will support expanded family-friendly policies
- **State level** decision-makers will engage families as meaningful partners in the development of policies and programs that will ultimately influence their well-being
- **State policies** will support family self-sufficiency
- Application processes for **state-supported** programs will be streamlined and coordinated

Parent Education –

- All **children** will be raised in a safe, supportive, and nurturing family environment
- **Families of young children** will have access to the training and resources they need to support their children's healthy development
- Multiple **community agencies** will collaborate to provide parenting education opportunities and services which are accessible, adequate, and meet the needs of subgroups in the community (e.g., special healthy care needs, substance abuse, grandparents raising grandchildren, etc.)
- **State policies** will address the problems of access to parent education training and resources for families across the state

For more information, contact Kathy Stegall or Martha Reeder, Arkansas DHS, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, (501) 683-4601 or kathy.stegall@mail.state.ar.us or martha.reeder@mail.state.ar.us

The Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (AECCS) Initiative

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Early Care & Education

Deliberate Opportunities for cognitive,
Physical, Social and Emotional Learning
Training on Child Health and Development
Training on Maintaining a Safe and
Healthy Early Care Environment
Parent Education/Anticipatory Guidance
Child Observation to identify possible
Physical/emotional health problems
Linkage to Community Resources

Medical Home

On-going Assessment of Child Development
Elicit & Address Parent Concerns
Anticipatory Guidance
Preventive Health Care
Acute and Chronic Health Care
Integration with Community Resources for Referral

Integrated Service Delivery Platform

Maximize
Existing investment in
Early Childhood

School Readiness

Arkansas children
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Home Visiting,
Housing Services
Adult Education
Job & Life Skills Training
Marriage & Family
Counseling
Case Management

Family Support

Anticipatory Guidance from
Pediatrician
Anticipatory Guidance from ECE
Provider
Child Birth Classes
Parenting Classes
Advice from Friends and Family
Parenting Information from Media
Sources

Parent Education

Positive Parent Child Interactions,
Infant Mental Health Consulting
In ECE Programs
Part C

Social Emotional Health

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